

Message Text

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SUBJ: CHEMICAL RESIDUES ON CITRUS IMPORTS

REFS: A) TOFAS 417; B) FASTO 327

DEPT PASS AGRIC FOR HUME AND FITSZIMMONDS

1. AGATT REPS VISIT MHW'S NATL. INSTITUTE OF HYGIENIC SCIENCES (NIHS) JUNE 19 WITH DR. DAWSON, SUNKIST SCIENTIST. (NIHS IN CHARGE OF TESTING FRUIT SAMPLES FOR FUNGICIDE RESIDUES.) PURPOSE OF VISIT WAS TO COMPARE ANALYTICAL METHODS FOR TESTING FRUIT TO TRY AND DETERMINE WHY 24,000 CARTONS MENTIONED REF A TESTED NEGATIVE AT SUNKIST LONG BEACH LAB AND POSITIVE IN MHW LAB. RESULTS OF TWO-HOUR DISCUSSION SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

A. DAWSON CAME AWAY CONVINCED THAT DR. UCHIYAMA, DIRECTOR, FOOD DIVISION, NIHS AND MHW SCIENTISTS IN GENERAL ARE VERY COMPETENT.

B. MHW HAS DEVELOPED NEW TESTING METHOD WHICH CAN BE USED TO TEST FOR OPP, TBZ AND DIPHENYL IN ONE OPERATION. AT PRESENT THEY USING THREE DIFFERENT TESTS TO DO THIS. NEW METHOD WILL BECOME OFFICIAL METHOD SOON.

C. MOST PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR DISCREPANCY IN LONG BEACH TEST VS MHW TEST (AND FOR DAN GALLO CASE IN REF B) IS DIFFERENCES IN SAMPLES TAKEN OR CHANCE, I.E., LONG BEACH PULLED SAMPLE THAT HAPPENED TO BE CLEAN WHILE MHW PULLED ONE THAT HAPPENED TO HAVE 0.5 PPM OR MORE RESIDUE. UNDER U.S. PACKING PLANT CONDITIONS, THIS LIKELY TO HAPPEN AGAIN AND AGAIN BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH PACKER STOPS OPERATIONS AND CLEANS UP MACHINERY IN ORDER TO PACK FOR JAPAN,

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THERE IS LIKELY TO BE SOME RESIDUE LEFT ON BRUSHES, ETC.

D. AMOUNTS OF OPP/TBZ BEING DETECTED ON U.S. CITRUS BY MHW HAS BEEN DECLINING IN RECENT WEEKS. MANY QTE BOARDER LINE CASES UNQTE OCCURING, E.G., 0.6 PPM, 0.7 PPM., ETC.

2. TODAY (JUNE 20) SUNKIST'S VAN HORN ASKED AGATT OFFICE TO GET MEETING WITH DR. MIURA, DIRECTOR, FOOD SANITATION DIV., MHW, TO DISCUSS POSSIBILITY OF MHW RETESTING TWO REJECTED LOTS (24,000 CARTONS) ON SK24. MIURA REFUSED TO MEET VAN HORN ET.A). EVEN WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY AGATT ASST. BUT SAID HE WOULD MEET AGATT REPS. SEPARATELY. THIS EXPLAINED TO VAN HORN PERSONALLY AT HIS HOTEL. HE ACCEPTED IT WITHOUT ARGUMENT BUT REQUESTED WE TAKE SUNKIST CASE (24,000 CARTONS) TO MIURA AND ASK FOR HIS RECONSIDERATION.

3. AGATT REPS MET WITH MIURA AND HIS ASSISTANT NAGANO IN P.. (JUNE 20). SUMMARY POINTS OF MEETING AS FOLLOWS:

A. MIURA DID NOT WANT TO MEET WITH VAN HORN RE REJECTED SHIPMENT BECAUSE HE (MIURA) IS BEING ACCUSED BY SUNKIST'S (NISHIMOTO TRADING COMPANY'S) COMPETITORS OF GIVING FAVORS. LAST YEAR WHEN PROBLEM OCCURRED, SUNKIST HAD SPECIAL BOXES FOR JAPAN STATING THAT DIPHENYL WAS BEING USED WHILE MANY OTHERS HAD SUNKIST BOXES (APPARENTLY PURCHASED FROM STREET BROKERS) STAMPED WITH OPP OR TBZ, ETC. MHW (MIURA), AFTER RECEIVING ASSURANCE FROM SUNKIST (NISHIMOTO) THAT THEY WERE NOT USING ILLEGAL FUNGICIDES, LET SUNKIST FRUIT IN WITH OUT REQUIRING TESTS BUT ORDERED OTHER SUNKIST FRUIT IMPORTERS TO HAVE TESTS CONDUCTED. THESE OTHER IMPORTERS, FEARING THEIR FRUIT WOULD TEST POSITIVE, OBTAINED SAMPLES FROM MARKET OF SUNKIST (NISHIMOTO) FRUIT WHICH HAD CLEARED CUSTOMS. (LAST YEAR AND IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THIS YEAR'S PROBLEMS IMPORTERS WERE ALLOWED TO PICK THEIR OWN SAMPLES TO TAKE TO MHW DESIGNATED LABS FOR TESTING. NOW MHW TAKES THE SAMPLES.) BUT WHEN IMPORTERS TOOK THE SUPPOSEDLY CLEAN SUNKIST (NISHIMOTO) SAMPLES TO THE LABS., OPP WAS DISCOVERED. THEY, THEREFORE, BEGAN TO ACCUSE SUNKIST (NISHIMOTO) OF SETTING UP WHOLE AFFAIR IN ORDER TO GET BIGGER SHARE OF THE MKT. MHW ALSO CAME IN FOR CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM FROM NON- NISHIMOTO IMPORTERS. THEREFORE, MIURA HAS ESTABLISHED POLICY OF MEETING ONLY WITH ONE-VOICE IMPORTER'S SPOKESMAN, VIZ., JAPAN FRUIT AND VEG. IMPORT ADMIN. COUNCIL (JFVIAC). OF COURSE THEY MET ONCE WITH SUNKIST IN EARLY STAGES OF PROBLEM BECAUSE SUNKIST WENT THROUGH MINISTER OHIRA TO GET APPOINTMENT. NOW, IN ORDER TO LEND SUPPORT JFVIAC THEY (MHW) PLAN RESTRICT DISCUSS- LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SION WITH TRADE TO THAT GROUP. (NISHIMOTO IS RELUCTANT MEMBER OF GROUP).

B. MHW CANNOT REPEAT CANNOT RETEST A LOT TESTED AND REJECTED BY NIHS. THERE ARE CASES WHERE NIHS HAS RETESTED A LOT DECLARED NEGATIVE BY ONE OF MHW'S DESIGNATED LABS. BUT ALL LEMONS ARE NOW BEING TESTED BY NIHS.

C. MHW'S SAMPLING METHODS ARE NOT NECESSARILY SCIENTIFIC. MIURA RECOGNIZES THIS. THEY TAKE 10 LEMONS AT RANDOM FROM EACH LABEL.

THE NUMBER OF CARTONS IN LABEL BEING SAMPLED IS NOT TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION. IF LABEL CONSISTS OF 1000 CARTONS OR 15,000 CARTONS THEY WOULD STILL TAKE ONLY 10 LEMONS AS SAMPLE. THIS IS SCIENTIFICALLY NOT CORRECT, BUT THEY ARGUE (A) THEY COULDN'T STAND THE ADDED WORK LOAD OF TAKING LARGER SAMPLES FROM LARGER LABELS AND (B) THEIR PURPOSE IS TO FIND OPP OR TBZ IF IT'S THERE.

D. MIURA SAYS THEY CANNOT RAISE THE CUT-OFF POINT FROM CURRENT 0.5 PPM TO SAY 0.8 PPM FOR POLITICAL REASONS. THEY HAVE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE TOKYO METRO GOVT. AND ALL OTHER LOCAL GOVTS. TO USE 0.5 PPM AS THE CUT-OFF POINT. TO TRY AND BRING IT UP WOULD BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE AND COUNTER PRODUCTIVE IN EFFORT TO GET GOJ APPROVAL OF OPP & TBZ. THEY HAVE TESTING SENSITIVITY ENOUGH TO MAKE THE CUT-OFF POINT 0.00 PPM (CONFIRMED BY DR. DAWSON) WHICH THE LAW TECHNICALLY REQUIRES, BUT 0.5 PPM WAS ARBITRARILY ESTABLISHED AS POINT BETWEEN ACCIDENTAL APPLICATION AND DELIBERATE APPLICATION.

E. MIURA POINTED OUT THAT SINCE CURRENT PROBLEMS BEGAN THEIR REGULAR MONITORING TESTS OF DIPHENYL RESIDUE SHOW A SHARP INCREASE. USED TO AVERAGE ABOUT 10-12 PPM. NOW IT'S UP TO 40-50 PPM WITH SOME OVER THE 70 PPM TOLERANCE LEVEL. HE HOPED THIS WOULD NOT BECOME PROBLEM AS IT WOULD ONLY COMPLICATE MATTERS. GENERALLY KNOWN HERE THAT OPP & TBZ ARE PROBABLY SAFER THAN DIPHENYL IN HUMAN FOODS.

F. MIURA SHOWED US DOCUMENT PREPARED BY HIS DIVISION TO USE TO CONVINCE DIET MEMBERS ET.AL. THAT OPP & TBZ SHOULD BE APPROVED. SAID THEY HAD BEGUN THEIR PR EFFORTS ALONG THESE LINES A FEW DAYS AGO. HIS STRATEGY AS DEVELOPED WITH JFVIAC IS TO WAIT UNTIL NO MORE FRUIT IS BEING TURNED BACK, I.E., UNTIL VIRTUALLY ALL FRUIT ENTERING JAPANESE PORTS TESTS NEGATIVE FOR A WHILE THEN JFVIAC WILL MAKE OFFICIAL PETITION TO MHW TO APPROVE OPP & TBZ. (AGATT OFFICE WILL BE ASKED TO HELP IN SOME WAY WHEN JFVIAC MAKES ITS OFFICIAL APPROACH TO MHW, BUT HOW HAS NOT CLEARLY EXPLAINED).

G. NOTE: THIS STRATEGY IS VERY JAPANESE, I.E., IMPORTERS SHOW THEIR GOOD FAITH BY BRINGING ONLY CLEAN FRUIT TO JAPAN THEN, WHEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEY'VE PROVED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO MEET DEMANDS OF THE GOVT. THEY ARE IN POSITION TO ASK FOR GOVT'S FAVOR IN CHANGING FOOD SANITATION LAW (APPROVING OPP & TBZ).

H. MIURA SAID THAT THE QTE FARM BLOCK UNQTE IN THE DIET HAS QTE SUGGESTED UNQTE THAT OPP & TBZ NOT BE APPROVED. THERE IS GROWER OPPOSITION BUT IT SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED ENTIRELY FORMIDABLE.

HODGSON

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